



# Community Television Review

Vol. 11 No. 2 April/May 1988

## Public policy: public action!

By Sharon Ingraham  
Chair, NFLCP

One of the most important activities of the NFLCP is in the public policy arena. At every level of government and the courts, public access and local programming provisions are facing challenges. Those challenges include not only the struggle for funding, channel space and equipment, but also the issue centering on the constitutionality of access requirements.

The NFLCP has greatly increased its efforts, this past year, to insure the future of public access. Through increased visits and communications with Congress, improved networking with other telecommunication public policy organizations and activities such as the First Amendment Conference, it is our hope to keep the protection of access a high priority among lawmakers.

On March 19, I joined several other NFLCP members in testifying before Congressman Edward Markey, Chairman of the House Telecommunications and Commerce Subcommittee. As a prelude to the Congressional cable hearings starting at the end of March, the Congressman wanted to hear about "competition in the cable industry" from his home constituents in Massachusetts (I live in a neighboring district.). Although much of the testimony centered on rate deregulation and service quality, many of the community spokespersons expressed concern over their access provisions, particularly when access is held, in their words, "hostage" in exchange for promises of lower rates.

Just as access is diverse, however, so

is the NFLCP. As you read this issue of *CTR*, Hometown USA tapes are still pouring in through the mail. The folks down in Tampa are gearing up for a great National Convention in July. The National Board of Directors is about to meet in Washington and immediately following is the First Amendment Conference. The Board has made grass roots participation and special human interest outreach high priorities. Over the next year, you should all see positive changes resulting from those priorities. One example is that NFLCP has just offered an exchange of memberships to the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence. This group believes very strongly in free speech on public access and the Institute

is about to publish a major report on cable.

The Fundraising Coordinating Committee held its first formal conference call recently. NFLCP Vice-Chair Alex Quinn and former NFLCP chair Jan Leshner Ireland are co-chairing that effort. The committee should have a report ready for the delegates when the NFLCP National Business Meeting convenes in Tampa.

I hope to see many of you in Washington for the First Amendment Conference and even more of you at the National Convention. All of us on the Board of Directors will want to hear from you about your needs and interests, and where the NFLCP can serve you best.

## NFLCP on the move again

By Peter Solomon  
Executive Director

By now most of you know that upon my arrival at NFLCP in August 1987, I was greeted by a rather grim picture. Over the past several years, the organization had accumulated a significant deficit. It had a large amount of past due debts and very little cash with which to operate.

Clearly, the situation called for immediate corrective actions. During the fall and winter, the Board and I began the hard process of revitalizing the NFLCP.

I appear to have survived my first six months as executive director. As the old joke goes, the rumors of my death were quite premature. The cold months were just that — cold; now that spring is here, I can see signs of renewal. We're ready to

get on the move.

And so we have. We have moved the National Office to a facility that is modest but comfortable. Our new address is P.O. Box 27290, Washington, DC 20038-7290. We also have a new phone number: (202) 829-7186.

The office move is just one of the steps we have taken to build our financial health and stability. This, the second issue of *CTR* in its new format, is another. The National Board of Directors has formed a new committee to develop and coordinate a comprehensive fundraising plan. And there are other changes afoot as well.

We're not simply trying to solve financial problems for this organization.

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# Improving quality control for cablecast

By Jeff Santlofer

The production of community access television programs by the citizens of a cable franchise area is dependent upon the provision of suitable production equipment and facilities, the support of professional staff people who provide training and manage the channels, and a program origination center able to cablecast videotape and live material in a manner that allows for the clear delivery of programming to subscribers' homes.

## The Delivery System

One may look at the production of access programs as the manufacture of a commodity that requires safe and sure delivery to a marketplace. Instead of crating the inventory for shipping, finding a carrier that will deliver the shipment in one piece, and displaying it in a retail outlet, a television program has to be reviewed for technical quality, labeled for inventory (library) control, delivered to the cable operator within certain technical standards, and be received at the customer's home in a manner that is consistent with the other services carried on the cable system.

Today's modern cable television system is a shopping mall of program selection. Basic cable services, premium channels and broadcast signals all strive towards an on-air look that will attract the most viewers possible. Our challenge in community access programming may not be the same in terms of seeking a mass audience, but we certainly must deliver the best possible signal in order to make the access channel watchable.

If our "storefront" does not look as good as the others on the street, absolutely no incentive exists for new viewers to stop and look, for occasional viewers to check what's on, or for a regular constituency of viewers to develop. If every other channel on the cable system is being received distortion free and without interference, there is a strong disincentive for a viewer to select the community channel.



Providing a quality access signal to cable subscribers depends in part on cablecasting from a technically sound control center. If we can't provide a clean signal, why should viewers tune in?

## The Signal Flow

When you look out through a high quality glass window, your view is identical to what you would see if you were standing outside. The window is "transparent." Similarly, the standard operating philosophy in cable is that the signal reaching the viewer's home must be processed in such a manner that audio and video are technically identical to the actual source material being played back or received at the head end—the cablecast system is also transparent.

This concept of transparency is no different for community access television. There is no sense in providing state-of-the-art production facilities and equipment, professional training and efficient management if community programming material does not receive the same quality control and processing as its companion signals on the cable system.

The actual baseband video and audio signals, as they come from the playback VCR, studio, or remote van, must be monitored and processed so that inherent electronic or mechanical errors are corrected before they enter the modulator for insertion into the cable system. This is

normally accomplished through the time base correction of the video signal, and the noise reduction and/or level control of the audio signal.

Time base correction is the digital processing of the video portion of a videotape playback to align the recorded signal to an accurate standard reference signal. The time base corrector, or TBC, corrects the mechanical error generated by the rotating video head and the rapidly moving videotape in order to stabilize and control the signal for cablecast purposes. The TBC also allows for control of the picture's video gain, black level, phase, and chroma. (It is possible to demonstrate on a home TV set the effect of each of these adjustments by adjusting the TV's brightness, contrast, hue, and color controls, respectively.)

Remember that, without correction, the mechanical error and overall degradation of the video signal will get worse as it passes through each step of the cable system—the modulator, every amplifier out on the system, and the subscriber's converter will each make the signal a little bit worse. The problems will be multi-

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plied if the signal is being sent by microwave or upstream cable to the cable company's head end.

The use of an audio compressor/limiter allows for control of the audio portion of the program. The compressor/limiter will prevent loud sounds from overmodulating (distorting) when cablecast, and ensure that the overall volume level equals as that of the other channels.

The next step in the flow of the audio and video signals is the routing switcher. This device allows the cablecast operator to select between different signal sources (VCRs, studio, remote van, etc.). The routing switcher must be connected to the same synchronization or "sync" source as all of the video program sources. This enables the switcher to provide a "clean" switch—that is, one that does not cause the picture to break up or roll. Switchers that are capable of doing a clean switch are called "active" routing switchers; switchers which have no internal electronics and are unable to do a clean switch are called "passive" routing switchers.

After departure from the routing switcher, the selected signal travels to its designated RF (Radio Frequency) modulator for insertion into the cable system. At this point, the community access television signal leaves its solo environment and becomes part of the multichannel cable universe.

#### Control Center Configuration

The design of a program origination system is wholly dependent on the number of channels to be managed, the number of video/audio sources, and the level of automation and/or human control.

The first issue to deal with is the number of channels that must be managed. Large urban cable systems often have to manage one or more local origination channels (which may or may not include pay-per-view events), control public, educational or governmental access channels, handle non-duplication or regional protection of distant signals or basic cable services, and manage commercial insertion availabilities on basic

cable channels.

The number of playback VCRs and TBCs, the complexity of the routing switcher matrix (the number of inputs and outputs), the type of video and audio monitoring for quality control, and the number of actions that may have to happen simultaneously, will determine the level of computer assistance required. A small system with two or three community channels may well be run by a single human operator, while a large system with multiple channels may need a fully computerized, automated control center.

An experienced broadcast or cable origination engineer with available support from local equipment vendors can design suitable program playback systems. The challenges lay within the operator's desire to provide consistent signal quality and his ability to decide on a manner for providing it.

#### Summary

It would be reasonable to suggest that cable operators be required to meet appropriate technical standards for playback and cablecast of videotape, live and remote video/audio community access television signals, in such a way that these signals meet the consistent "On-Air" quality of the other cable services.

Such standards should take into consideration the videotape formats in use, the type of signal processing that may or may not already be in existence, the level of simultaneous or proximate switching events that take place, and the overall intent to provide quality cable television signals to consumers.

Such requirements do not imply that community access television programs will consistently compete with the production values of their commercial and premium neighbors. But the cable subscriber will be provided with a high-quality signal to ensure a clear and consistent window for expression and involvement. Such access will only be protected if cable operators provide the same attention to the cablecast of community access channels as they do for their commercial program services.

*Jeff Santlofer is Program Director at Staten Island Community Television in New York.*



### Conference Promo Available

Having trouble trying to convince your friends to join you at the National Conference in Tampa, Florida this summer? Why not show them the official Tampa '88 promo?

Copies have been sent to all regional chairs and are available from them or from Convention Central in Tampa. For a dub straight from the master, send a blank tape with return postage to:

Tampa '88 Promo  
%Public Access Center  
1001 North B Street  
Tampa, FL 33606

Look for the promo in the upcoming DEEP DISH TV series, too!



### Telecommunications and the First Amendment

On April 10-12, 1988, the NFLCP and the United Church of Christ Office of Communication are co-sponsoring a conference centering on the issues arising from the First Amendment and electronic media. The focus will be on recognizing and protecting the public interest, with an emphasis on coalition building and practical action.

Leading broadcast and cable activists, journalists, communications and legal scholars, as well as representatives from Congress, the FCC and the industry will present papers, speak and conduct workshops. The conference is scheduled for the National 4-H Center, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland.

For information please call Lisa Strasburg, 202-244-7650 or Sharon Ingraham, 617-897-8066.

# The long & short of planning

By David Ford, P.E.

What are the basic principles of organizational planning? How can these principles can be applied to the planning process of a community programming organization? The illustrations here are chosen from specific practices of the Milwaukee Access Telecommunications Authority (MATA).

### Long & Short Term Planning

MATA actually utilizes three separate plans to manage its affairs, the Strategic Master Plan, the Operating Plan, and the Financial Plan. These three plans are linked by a formal process which ensures that they are mutually compatible.

1. The Board develops the Strategic Master Plan and assumes the role of stewardship to ensure that the plan is achieved.
  2. The Executive Director develops the Operating Plan, which defines the shortterm specific objectives for achieving the goals specified in the Strategic Master Plan.
  3. The Executive Director then assigns costs to the line items in the Operating Plan and develops a pro-forma three-year operating budget. The Board approves the pro-forma budget, and finally adopts an Operating Budget for the first year.
  4. MATA's capital budget is a 15 year plan for amortizing a one-time capital grant. This schedule of expenditures is reviewed and adjusted annually. The capital and operating budgets are combined to comprise the Financial Plan.
- This process provides several key features. The Board members are the stewards who set policy and allocate resources. The Executive Director is the resident professional responsible for day-to-day operations and the application of resources. All actions are aimed at a common goal and are initiated from a forward-looking stance. The occasions for false starts, ad hoc exercises, and "fire drills" are minimized.

### Why Plan?

"If you do not know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?"—Anonymous

"A plan is a prescribed procedure for achieving a desired end result."—*Webster's Dictionary*

Organizational captains should ask themselves these key questions continually: "Where are we going? How are we getting there? How will we exploit opportunities? How will we avoid obstacles?" Without a plan, any effort to achieve a specific end result will be little more than a random walk with very low probability for success. Proper planning does not guarantee the desired result but, if followed conscientiously, does maximize the probability of success.

### The Planning Horizon

Any plan should specify the deadline for meeting goals. Planning professionals call this date the *planning horizon*. It is significant because risk and uncertainty increase when the time span is stretched out. The critical difference between long- and short-range planning is not in the time span but rather in the degree of inherent risk and uncertainty.

The natural tendency is to minimize risk and uncertainty by using a short term planning horizon. Unfortunately, this practice is problematic because short-term planning encourages myopia—the planner can easily lose sight of the big picture. This dilemma can be resolved with these steps:

1. Select a medium term planning horizon that has a manageable level of risk and uncertainty;
2. Develop a multi-year plan that addresses these adversities, and finally;
3. Adopt the first year of the plan.

This process works very well because the plan is derived from the forward-looking scenario and the uncertainty for one year is minimal. The key point is that the planning horizon should be set with great concern about the degree

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# The ACD: Access strikes back

(From *MULTICHANNEL NEWS* - February 15, 1988 used with permission)

Ten public access organizations throughout the country have established the Alliance for Communications Democracy to represent their interests in federal lawsuits brought by cable companies challenging the constitutionality of access channels and financial responsibility in support of them.

Principally, ACD was formed to contribute friend-of-the - court briefs in

two cases that are being appealed to federal appellate courts in Erie, Penn. and Palo Alto, Calif. according to Sherry Goodman, president and chief executive officer of the Chicago Access Corp. and president of ACD.

"We wanted to make sure that the courts have the benefit of our point of view," Ms. Goodman said. While the organization's immediate concerns are those two pending cases, it is "possible (ACD) may develop beyond that" when public access interests are threatened, she

said, adding that ACD's intention and commitment is for this year only.

In addition, to the Chicago Access Corp., founding members also include: Fairfax Cable Access Corp., Fairfax Va.; Montgomery Community TV, Rockville Md.; Staten Island Community Television, Staten Island, N.Y.; Access 30 Dayton, Dayton, Ohio; Milwaukee Television Authority, Milwaukee; Boston Community Access and Programming Foundation, Boston; GRTV, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Columbus Community Cable Access, Columbus, Ohio; and Portland Cable Access, Portland, Ore.

For the Erie case, ACD hired attorney Joseph Van Eaton of the Washington firm Spiegel & McDiarmid. Attorney Michael Meyerson, a way professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law, will represent ACD in the Palo Alto case.

Ms. Goodman said it is important for access organizations to be separately represented in such cases because their interests are not adequately addressed by others, such as franchising authorities, which are more concerned with municipally operated access channels.

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We're taking a fresh look at the way we operate. The Board has started to re-examine the way it conducts its business. It is experimenting with ways to streamline decision-making and shift more responsibility onto its committees. At the same time the National Office is working to achieve three specific short term objectives.

1. To develop a solid financial resource base to provide NFLCP with the operating flexibility it currently lacks.

2. To develop and implement interim strategies to deliver our current services to members in a consistent and reliable manner.

3. To improve communication between national, regions, and local chapters.

These short term efforts are designed to improve our stewardship skills. After all, that's our mission: to protect and enhance the public's right to free expression through the medium of cable television. We certainly can't be effective

stewards for the American public if we are not effective in that role in our own organization.

Beyond these immediate goals, my desire is to take a hard look at how we serve NFLCP members. Given your diversity, I'm concerned that we need to find new and better ways to meet distinct sets of needs. I think in the long run that NFLCP can give you more value and benefits by narrowcasting our services to your specific needs. Looking to our external environment, NFLCP must begin to tackle what I believe are the three major challenges that face community television: visibility, accountability and consistency. But one step at a time.

On that cryptic note, let's not forget that spring is also a time that things really start moving around here. That's because of the major activities we have planned for members. The deadline was not even here at press time and we had already received more than 500 entries for the 1988 Hometown USA Video Festival. Some of you have already taken advantage of early bird savings by registering for the 1988 NFLCP National Convention in Tampa, Florida. I hope to see many of you at the First Amendment Conference in Washington, D.C. April 10-12.

The first signs of spring are encouraging. But let's not lose ourselves in the fever of blossoming activities. NFLCP has hard work ahead of it. I hope that each of you continue to give your support, involvement and patience as we work to renew NFLCP'S Foundations.

kə-'myu-nət-e  
'tel-ə-vizh-ən  
ri-'vyu

We need 'yu' to make *Community Television Review*. We need your contributions of articles, photos, and other information.

What's going on in your access center, area or region? Write us or better yet, put us on your newsletter mailing list to keep us up to date!

CTR  
%Dave Olive  
3004 Aquila  
Tampa, FL 33629

Our next deadline for submissions is April 30. Articles and information submitted by that date will be included in the June/July issue.

p.s. - Use the NFLCP Bulletin Board whenever possible! It's fast and reliable. Address mail to "CTR Managers".





# NFLCP Public Policy Committee report

By Tom Karwin  
NFLCP Public Policy Committee

## Legislative Advocacy

The House Subcommittee's hearings on the 1984 Cable Act have been rescheduled again, and are now expected to begin March 31, 1988. The NFLCP has requested an opportunity to present its testimony to the Subcommittee. Apparently, we're in a long line of people who like to give a piece of their minds! We haven't yet been assured of a slot on the agenda, but we're working on it, and are optimistic.

The Public Policy Committee can write to the 22 members of the House Subcommittee, but they should hear from their constituents, too. We're recruiting NFLCP members to make one-to-one contacts with their Congressional representatives who are members of this key Subcommittee; so far, we have 13 Subcommittee members "covered". If you live in the Congressional District of one of the following members and are willing to write or call him on behalf of the NFLCP, contact me at PO Box 7600, Santa Cruz, CA 95061; (408) 429-2208.

Rep. Dan Coats, R-IN  
Rep. Cardiss Collins, D-IL  
Rep. Wayne Dowdy, D-MS  
Rep. Jack Fields, R-TX  
Rep. Howard Nielson, R-UT  
Rep. Bill Richardson, D-NM  
Rep. Don Ritter, R-PA  
Rep. Jim Slattery, D-KS  
Rep. Mike Synar, D-OK

Meanwhile, the Senate Judiciary Committee's Antitrust Subcommittee, which is Chaired by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), has begun its hearings on possible anti-trust problems in the cable industry. The Senate, like the House, has been hearing constituents' complaints about cable rates and services, but seems more inclined to "encourage" the industry to regulate itself with more enthusiasm than to re-open the Cable Act.

The regional telephone companies are pushing hard for deregulation of their services, but are being restrained by Federal District Judge Greene, who has

ruled that telco's should not control both the content and the conduit of "information services" (which includes "cable services"). In my opinion, Judge Greene understands reality. Rep. Howard Nielson, however, believes that telco's as well as cable companies should be permitted to originate and distribute video programming and has introduced a bill to allow teleco's to offer cable services within their service areas.

## Legal Advocacy

On Feb. 1, 1987, The Alliance for Communications Democracy filed a "friend of the court" brief in the case, "Erie Telecommunications, Inc., v. City of Erie (PA)," which is before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. The Alliance's brief presented the legal arguments for public access very persuasively, and complemented the brief of the defendant, the City of Erie (which argued mostly to protect its franchise fee revenues). The court both accepted the filing and granted the Alliance "leave to participate in oral arguments" if the City lets the Alliance use a bit of the City's 20 minutes.

In "Century Federal, Inc., v. City of Palo Alto, California" (another case that is important to the future of public access), the City attempted to bypass the Appeals Court level and take its case directly to the U.S. Supreme Court. The high court turned down the City's request, so the City will file its appeal in the Appeal Court.

The effect of this maneuvering is that "Group W Cable v. The City of Santa Cruz and the County of Santa Cruz (CA)" (also important to the future of public access) has moved to the front of the line that will eventually lead to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Alliance might file a "friend of the court" brief in the "Santa Cruz" case, as well.

## Information Activities

The NFLCP's Telecommunications & the First Amendment conference will be held in Washington, DC April 10 - 12, 1988.

The Public Policy Committee's "advocacy manual," long in the works, is now in the advanced draft stage. The draft will be presented to the Board of Directors during its April meeting, then field-tested, and finally printed for initial sales at the NFLCP 1988 National Convention in Tampa. The publication will not be titled "advocacy manual" or anything like that. We're keeping the present working title under wraps and we're open to your suggestions.



## A taxing matter for all

By Tom Karwin

In California, a state appeals court recently affirmed the authority of local franchisors to charge cable operators a "possessory interest tax" (a form of property tax) for their use of the public right of way. The cable industry has sponsored a bill to limit the total of this tax and the franchise fee to five percent. The bill probably doesn't have a chance, since local franchisors will fight it, and the state

attorney general issued an opinion last year that the state couldn't impose such a law on cities. I'm interested in using this debate to suggest that possessory interest taxes should be used to compensate the public for the cable operator's uses of the right of way, and the franchise fee should be used for CABLE-RELATED PURPOSES! If anyone out there could tell me of another state in which franchisors charge cable operators a possessory interest tax, I would be most interested.



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### NFLCP BBS

Looking for the best way to get your message out to NFLCP members? Try our electronic bulletin board. Set your modem at 300 or 1200 baud, 8 data bits, 1 stop bit, no parity and dial (217) 359-9118.

### National Office Move

The NFLCP financial plans called for a move to smaller, more efficient quarters.

Our new offices are at the old Cambodian Embassy at 4530 16th St.NW. It's a neat old mansion, and our office is one large room with enough space for several people to work together. Mail and calls should go to the new P.O. Box and new phone number below.

NFLCP

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Washington, D.C. 20038-7290

(202) 829-7186

New address for:

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*Specializing in Community Television*

### Career Opportunity

Community Television Manager of new PEG access program in Washington County, Oregon (west suburban Portland), operating two access centers for a cable system serving 40,000+ subscribers. This cable regulatory commission-based program will employ approximately 12 employees, and have an equipment inventory of nearly \$1 million.

The Community Television Manager will supervise a PEG access and community programming staff, manage the fiscal resources of the Community Access Division, staff various committees, conduct long-range and short-range planning and promotion for the development of the program, conduct fund raising activities, and provide reports for the Metropolitan Area Communications Commission, a 15 jurisdiction consortium of local governments administering a cable television franchise. The Manager will report to the MACC Administrator.

Qualifications include at least three years of current progressive management experience in PEG access and/or local origination, a demonstrated commitment to community programming, and graduation from a four-year college or university with a major in communications, broadcast management, or a related field. Position requires considerable knowledge and experience in all aspects of management of either government or non-profit operated PEG access programs.

Salary Range: Approximately \$28,000 to \$34,000, plus excellent benefit package, including retirement.

Resumes, with letters of intent and references, should be postmarked or delivered by April 15, 1988 to: MACC "Community T.V. Manager", 1815 N.W. 169th Pl., Suite 6020, Beaverton, OR 97006.

**TELEVISION ENGINEER/TECHNICIAN:** Metropolitan Area Communications Commission (a consortium of local governments) seeks engineer to manage technical facilities and provide training in technical procedures for its community tv program.

A creative, highly skilled technical position requiring considerable knowledge and skill in video and audio technology/repair of tv production equipment, supervision of complex tv productions, and training.

Qualifications: Min. 2 yrs. exp. maintenance/repair of tv production equipment; vocational/college training in tv electronics & engineering.

\$22,676 - 28,941 DOQ. Excellent benefits package. Resumes/references to be postmarked by 4/22/88 to MACC-Technician, 1815 NW 169th Pl. #6020, Beaverton, OR 97006.

Register now for the NFLCP National Conference and take advantage of earlybird rates! Check the mail for more details!

## Get ready for the best National Conference under the sun!

The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers  
presents its Eleventh National Convention  
July 14-16, 1988 in Tampa, Florida.

- Delegates' Business Meeting July 12 & 13
- Pre-conference Seminars July 14
- Fun in the Sun all week!



Look for more details and convention registration materials  
in the near future!



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of certainty, more so than simply naming a deadline.

MATA uses several different horizons. The horizon for the Capital Plan is 15 years because that is the term of the franchise, and the capital grant has been fully paid and is already invested. The horizon for the Strategic Master Plan is three years because the operating environment is too volatile to project much beyond that. The calendar year drives the Operating Plan because of required fiscal closings and other annual reports.

### **Strategic Planning**

'The best laid plans of mice and men go awry' because unexpected events and unknown forces are inevitable. The techniques for confronting adversity come either from contingency planning or from strategic planning. Either plan requires a thorough analysis and understanding of the consequences. The difference between the two is that contingency planning prescribes secondary choices in case of adversity, and strategic planning describes the procedure for achieving the primary choices despite adversity. The unique feature of strategic planning is not so much in the procedure, but more so in the stubborn mindset to achieve the primary goal.

At MATA, the master plan is strategic because it identifies opportunity and adversity, along with the strategy for sailing through the minefields without a sweeper. The Board maintains a policy of laissez-faire with respect to daily operations, which is a license for professional staff to do whatever is necessary to achieve the primary goal. Contingency plans are allowed only for damage control in case of a dire emergency. Contingency plans, at their best, are diversions away from the original goals; therefore, the systematic response to imminent catastrophe must be a deliberated change in strategy, avoiding the danger of becoming lost on an uncharted sea of contingency plans.

### **The Planning Process**

There is no magic formula for a good planning process. The mechanics of the process are immaterial so long as the end

product reflects the basic intent of the planning principles. Too often, planners do the right things for the wrong reasons! The following discussion emphasizes the basic intentions and identifies some of the common mistakes to be avoided:

### **The Planning Retreat**

The retreat is universally accepted as an excellent format for the planning session. Unfortunately, the common mistake is to use the retreat as a time for reflection. Long range planning, by its very nature, requires a detailed analysis of future adversity. Therefore, the planning retreat, a day or days away from the office devoted to this one task, can be effective only if the quiet time is used to wrestle with arduous details.

### **Selection and Orientation**

It is common practice to select members for the planning group on the basis of their expertise. This practice courts disaster, because expertise is of secondary importance. Regardless of "what they know," the planning should be comprised of people who have a stake in the "ownership" of a successful operation. The sense of ownership is the driving force that will insist upon rigorous pursuit of the stated goals. Professional expertise is appropriate in the planning process, but this role should be for advisory purposes only. This advice underscores a principle that the planners set the direction and the experts perform the implementation.

At MATA, the strategic planning group includes the Board members, the Executive Director, the operational department heads, and appropriate consultants. The operational planning group includes the Executive Director, staff, and appropriate consultants. Even though MATA is a free-standing corporation, the cable operator and the City's cable regulation department are acknowledged as stakeholders via two ex-officio seats on the Board. Access organizations that are not independent corporations should recognize that their sponsors are stakeholders and therefore should have some kind of formal role in the planning process.

### **Identifying Critical Issues**

For the purpose of expediting this

task, any issue is deemed critical if somebody thinks it is critical. Brainstorming is an excellent tool for identifying these issues. Each planner comes to the brainstorming session with a personal list of concerns and presents them in round robin fashion. No criticism is permitted at this point because the rule of thumb is, "there is some latent good in every idea."

The session will yield a listing of unedited, unrebutted concerns that must be prioritized. Prioritizing is a voting procedure that ranks the issues and advises where the bulk of time, energy, and money should be spent. All issues should be addressed, but low priority ones shouldn't be made into Federal cases.

### **Goals and Action Items**

The prioritized issues should be referred to an appropriate subgroup where they can be developed into a full set of relevant goals and action plans after thorough research and deliberation. At MATA, the standing committees of the Board develop the strategic goals and the staff develops the operational goals.

A set of goal statements should be developed for each critical issue. A well-written goal statement will describe the expected result and time frame for accomplishment, and be written in measurable terms to ensure that an effective evaluation of achievement can be administered. The it should leave no doubt as to what is to be done. At the same time, it should not state how it is to be done, because this compromises the implementors' own expertise and ingenuity.

Each goal statement should be further expanded into a subset of related action items. Each action item should specify the direction, tempo and preferred strategy. If the goal is long term, the action items should be designed to serve as milestones that mark progress toward achievement of the goal. As with the goal statement, the action items must be written in measurable terms. Nonetheless, there should be room for flexibility and ingenuity in the implementation.

The planners should be reminded that here is the place where the strategic impact must be embedded. For reasons that were discussed earlier, the action

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items must be designed to reflect a stubborn commitment to achieve the goal in spite of adversity.

### Managing the Plan

No plan should be managed as if it were carved in stone. The best laid plan is no more than a scenario based upon educated guesses about the future. If the action items are readily measurable as prescribed, it is a simple matter to evaluate the performance on a continuing basis. If actual performance differs from the plan, the variances should be analyzed and clearly understood. With this insight into reality, good management practice mandates the flexibility to adjust the plan as appropriate.

Review and updating of the Long Range Plan should be an annual event. Therefore, each year, the cycle returns to Stage 1, where the planning process starts with a critical review and evaluation of all previous practices, including the most recent edition of the Long Range Plan. The purpose of the critical review is to identify those factors which should be deleted, modified, or retained. These determinations then become the new foundation for future planning, and should be included in the ground rules for further action.

### Epilogue

Community television organizations are new additions to the infrastructure of modern society. They must find their niche amidst the morass of existing societal structures. The environment is fraught with FCC regulations, cable franchise renegotiations, political power bases, scarce resources and uninformed publics. The road to success is not intuitively obvious. Progress does not automatically result simply because things are in motion. Therefore, the sincere strategy for survival sidetracks emotional impulses and pursues rational plans.

*David Ford has been President of MATA since 1984. He is a professional electrical engineer with 35 years experience in technology forecasting, new product planning, engineering management and new venture development at the Allen-Bradley Co. in Milwaukee, WI.*

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The DEEP DISH TV Network represents the first national public access satellite network. It's success began with a 10 show pilot series in 1986 and has played on over 250 cable systems, featuring the work of over 200 producers from 30 states.

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During the Spring and Summer of 1988, the shows will be transmitted via satellite and seen on public access cable TV channels and by home dish owners across the country. Each hour is being produced by a coordinating producer in a different region of the country. The

shows' themes and producers were chosen from proposals submitted by public access and independent producers who became involved with DEEP DISH during its first series in 1986.

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### Farming and Agri\*Culture

The recent "farm crisis" has had a devastating impact on the lives of individual farm families, the towns they live in and the land now taken over by large corporate farms.

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DEEP DISH TV, the first national public access satellite network, is pleased to announce a new series offering the best and most diverse programming on access.

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Date	Show
April 12	Deep Dish Warmer: a half hour of previews & promos.
April 19	Is this Working? Labor in the Eighties
April 26	Latino Images
May 3	People and the Land: Farming and Agri*Culture
May 10	About Face: Soldiers, Refugees, and other Victims of War
May 17	The Border: Where do You Draw the Line?
May 24	Angry Initiatives/Defiant Strategies
May 31	Biting the Hand that Leads Us: Humor and Social Change
June 7	Good Things Come from Small Packages
June 14	A Dish of Central America
June 21	Home Sweet Homefront: The Struggle for Decent Housing
June 28	Agewise
July 5	The Fourth International Women's Day Video Festival Part 1
July 12	The Fourth International Women's Day Video Festival Part 2
July 19	The Fourth International Women's Day Video Festival Part 3
July 26	The Fourth International Women's Day Video Festival Part 4
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# The ABCs of volunteer management

By Barbara Rutherford

Has it occurred to you that cable access volunteers can help in your marketing, outreach and recruitment efforts? The many volunteers who go through your training classes, produce programming, and work in television production can sing your praises in the community. Conversely, volunteers who have not been treated well in your organization can and will do just the opposite.

If you are committed to a volunteer-based community access organization, it is vitally important to set up a system to involve the volunteers. If the volunteer program is to succeed, it should include the nitty-gritty of volunteer management: recruitment, placement, training, evaluation and recognition.

Volunteer and personnel management are virtually the same thing. Companies spend much time and energy in planning for, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling paid staff. In order to prepare for a staff position, you would do a job analysis, develop a job description, advertise the position, screen and interview applicants for minimum qualifications, hire and train a person, and eventually evaluate and recognize this person for his or her contributions to the company.

That same kind of structure can be used to develop your volunteer program. Your challenge in dealing with both paid and unpaid staff is to find the right people for the right jobs and compensate them appropriately. In the case of the volunteers, compensation comes in the form of recognition earned, experience gained, and the satisfaction of working towards a goal.

## Volunteer Job Descriptions

Part of the recipe for a happy volunteer includes finding the value for value exchange in developing a volunteer job description. That exchange involves identifying all the positive aspects of a job to be performed by a volunteer and then finding a volunteer who needs those skills. Why would a volunteer want to perform this task? What are the payoffs

for the volunteer? Through a job analysis, you should be able to identify the positive aspects of the job, and from that analysis be able to develop a job description.

For instance, you have a need for a camera operator once a week over a three-month period to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of City Council meetings. Begin by identifying all the aspects of the job that would interest a volunteer. The volunteer could gain experience operating a camera, working on a television production team, gain advanced certification on the camera, and learn firsthand about city government.

Next, identify the job responsibilities. Will that person need to help check out, load, unload and set up a mobile unit? Will that person be expected to operate the camera for long periods of time? Will the volunteer be asked to direct the production? If so, what level of experience will you require of this person?

Once you have identified the duties of the job, you must identify minimum qualifications for the position. If a volunteer is to operate a remote camera, a minimum qualification could be completion of a camera class. Will the volunteer work with a production team? Think

about what kinds of experience the volunteer would need to perform the job. Who will supervise the volunteer? What will be the volunteer's work schedule and crew call times? What kind of production is it—live, taped, studio, remote? What channel will it be cablecast on? All this information is important to include in the job description.

## Recruitment

Now, you can recruit for the position. Your newsletter is a good place to begin. Be creative in your pitch. You can have a "Volunteer Classified" or "Volunteer Help Wanted" column. Also, consider doing a press release to local and specialty newspapers in your area that cater to seniors, minorities, and other groups included in your outreach efforts. In your press release, talk about the special characteristics of the job or jobs you are advertising.

Volunteers' motivations are important when looking for the right candidate for the right job. As any video producer will tell you, it is critical to know your viewing audience. The same goes for volunteers and their motivations for wanting to get involved in television

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What's the secret to keeping volunteers satisfied? Part of it is regular and effective feedback and recognition for work performed.



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production. In a recent seminar, noted volunteer management expert Marlene Wilson talked about the three reasons people volunteer in the 80s:

1. To make a commitment to a cause they believe in.
2. To achieve a feeling of connectedness with other people who believe in the cause.
3. For a chance at creative expression.

Television production fits neatly into these reasons to volunteer. We all know production is teamwork, and that in that framework there is plenty of room for creativity.

### **Placement**

Next comes the placement process. Once you have advertised for your job, the calls (hopefully) will come in. After an initial screening process to ascertain that a person has minimum qualifications to do the job and the time to do it, the volunteer can be placed in the crew position. At this time, you should go over the job description with the volunteer. At Multnomah Cable Access, the volunteer and the General Manager sign an agreement which includes the job description. In a ritualistic way, this kind of ceremony reinforces that the volunteer understands the agreement that you have both reached and will honor it.

Once the volunteer is placed in the production, you need to assign a supervisor who may be paid or unpaid staff. If you have designated the crew position as a "no experience necessary" beginning position, that person will need more support and hands-on training than a person who has had advanced certification.

Think about adding suspension and termination clauses into your job description. In many cases, volunteers are unpaid staff performing in a professional capacity in the community. Think about your organization's personnel as they relate to employee discipline—you many want to include the termination and suspension language from those policies. For instance, a volunteer may be terminated for theft, use of alcohol or drugs on the premises, or grossly negligent or intentional endangerment of equipment. Volunteer suspension may include a failure to report for assignment without notification, reporting under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or abusive behavior.

In the case of suspensions or terminations from your volunteer program, it is important to emphasize, in writing, the fact that the volunteer may continue to use the public access facilities, but may not participate in the volunteer program until a meeting is held with the volunteer, his supervisor, and the volunteer coordinator. No matter what your solution is concerning problem volunteers, be sure to include provisions to protect yourself.

### **Evaluation**

An evaluation process should be made available to the volunteer to give feedback and closure to the term of the agreement. Feedback can be as easy as, "You have a real handle on focusing in on shots, but next time let's go over your shot composition." Your evaluation tool can be taken from the volunteer job description's list of responsibilities. Schedule time in a quiet place to go over the volunteer's performance. This would be a good time to discuss other opportunities that might help him develop new skills.

### **Recognition**

I was once in a roundtable discussion of volunteer management in public access. One fellow said he had volunteered his time producing programs and never heard any positive feedback from the access staff about his contributions. He was unhappy, and had felt uncertain about his continued participation. This situation is easy to fix.

Recognition is very important in maintaining a healthy relationship with your volunteers. Beyond banquets and pins, a simple "How are you today, Bill?" or "Thank you!" comes under the category of volunteer recognition. If you can afford it (or you can get it donated), buy volunteers a meal after a long production.

At Multnomah Cable Access, we have annual "T-Shirt Awards" for volunteers working in our staff-produced programming. Volunteers receive a T-shirt and certificate for their three-month commitment. Our "First Annual T-Shirt Awards" ceremony brought about 80 people out in the dead of winter to celebrate their achievements in access.

Volunteers need structure and a pat on the back. In turn, satisfied volunteers will go out into your community with positive information about your access operation. Equally important, they will continue their commitment to community television as avid viewers, responsible production volunteers, and your own public relations agents.

*Barbara Rutherford is Community Relations Coordinator for Multnomah Cable Access in Gresham, Oregon.*

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### **Soldiers, Refugees, & Other Victims of War**

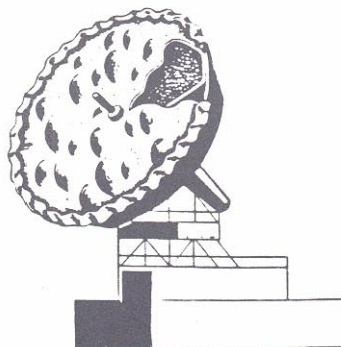
This program documents the effects of war on the people who fight them, the people who escape them, and its victims. Militarism is viewed from different perspectives with the message that it need not and should not dominate society.

### **Where Do You Draw the Line?**

Who draws the border lines (and points the surveillance cameras) to make sure everyone knows his place? Programs depict the potential harassment and violence in crossing borders; the arbitrariness and impact of border divisions; and how culture and television can foster connections across borders.

### **Angry Initiatives/Defiant Strategies**

These programs focus on aspects of the AIDS epidemic that mainstream media has ignored or distorted, including a special report from the October 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights





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